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## CALL FOR ACTION 2

### Increase bandwidth for satellite delivered remote Indigenous radio services to address sub standard audio quality

**Issue:** The 64Kbps bandwidth available for satellite delivery of all but one (1) of the fourteen (14) remote Indigenous radio services is well below industry standards of 128kbps for mono channels and the standard of 256kbps for stereo channels. Sound quality is compromised leading to “listener fatigue” and consequent switching off.

Remote Indigenous media organisations manage regional radio networks that are distributed via satellite to remote RIBS communities and retransmission sites across vast coverage areas. These are primary services for over 150 remote communities and towns, delivering news, emergency information, government messages and other locally relevant content. These are by far the most relevant and popular radio services, and in some sites the only service available.

14 Indigenous radio services are delivered to Imparja Television via codecs, where they are ‘muxed’ and conveyed to the Optus satellite via the uplink in Belrose NSW. While CAAMA radio has two services - a main stereo channel at 192kbps and a second channel at 128kbps - the remaining 12 services have only 64kbps of bandwidth allocated, which is not sufficient to deliver a stereo signal. This low bandwidth requires the audio quality to be highly compressed, providing a sub-standard service compared with regional and urban radio transmission services<sup>1</sup>.

The low bandwidth limits the ability of RIMOs to contribute live radio content to national broadcasters such as ABC, NIRS, CRN or other radio services. Poor audio quality affects the listener experience and leads to ‘listener fatigue’. While the radio desks, codecs and many radio transmitters in communities are enabled for stereo, the primary limitation is the bandwidth over the satellite.

The current minimum industry standard for stereo radio channels is 256kbps. To upgrade the 14 remote Indigenous radio services to 256kbps would require 2.3 Mbps of additional capacity, including data packs and buffering. Optus data packs are available in 1Mbps blocks at approximately \$70,000 per 1Mb block (2 additional blocks needed).

***IRCA calls for:***

**Provision of annual funding to increase the bandwidth required to 256kbps for each of the fourteen (14) satellite delivered remote Indigenous radio services quality to upgrade to stereo.**

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<sup>1</sup> The standard bandwidth for professional radio services is 256kbps.